



November 1997

VOTING INFORMATION NEWS

Vol. 7 No. 11

A roundup of voting news from the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) ✓ ✓ For voters, potential voters and those who assist voters.

Plan hits the mark

Voting Action Plan Maps Successful Program for 1998-99

The Secretary of Defense's Voting Action Plan (VAP) for 1998 and 1999 has been distributed to all DoD Components and other Executive Branch Agencies with employees or family members covered by the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)*. The Plan provides for guidance and implementation of the Federal Voting Assistance Program's (FVAP) worldwide voter assistance program. A senior official of O7 or above in each Military Service and a designated individual from each Executive Branch Department or Agency will coordinate and manage their respective voting assistance program.

Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs) are to be designated at every level of Command, Executive Branch Agency (referred to as "Agency"), and at each Embassy or Consulate to assist military and overseas citizens, and their eligible family members, in the absentee voting process. While the Plan focuses on the role and duties of the VAO, it can prove useful for any private citizen interested in conducting a voting assistance effort.

In the near future, the Secretary's Voting Action Plan will be available at www.fvap.gov. The FVAP will post each of the Service's specific voting action plans at this site as well. The FVAP has also developed a voting action plan to specifically address the needs of U.S. citizens residing overseas, not affiliated with the Federal government, which will also be posted on the FVAP's web site.

Phase I takes place November 1997 through

Spring 1998 and is for program preparation and implementation with emphasis on primary elections. This is the time for the procurement and distribution of voting materials such as the *1998-99 Voting Assistance Guide*, Federal Post Card Applications (FPCAs), and Federal Write-in Absentee Ballots (FWABs) to be available in all organizations for eligible voters and family members. It is incumbent upon individual VAOs to ensure availability of all materials to those citizens they are responsible for.

Installation, Agency and Embassy/Consulate telephone operators should be provided with a directory containing the name and office telephone numbers for the location's representative VAO by January 1998. Command, Agency, and Embassy/Consulate information programs should direct efforts to inform and motivate citizens, including family members, to exercise their right to vote in primaries and general elections. (see **VAP**, pg. 3)

Ten Ways to Facilitate the Absentee Voting Process for UOCAVA Citizens

Every year, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) submits a list of suggestions to the Chief Election Official in all the states and territories, in advance of the upcoming legislative session. Suggestions include legislative and administrative changes that the FVAP recommends these jurisdictions enact to facilitate further the absentee voting process for citizens voting under the *Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)*.

Because electoral laws vary widely from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, the FVAP seeks input from and coordinates its efforts directly through state and local election officials, state legislators, and their staff. The following is the list of initiatives aimed at simplifying the process that are being pursued this year. Other initiatives, relating to unique situations in particular states, are being pursued simultaneously.

The general initiatives are:

(1) Allow 45-Day Ballot Transit Time for Election Materials

We ask the states and territories to allow a minimum of 45 days between the date the ballot is mailed to the citizen and the due date by which the citizen must return the voted ballot to the local election official. This would be particularly beneficial for overseas citizens at both civilian and military locations. Allowing for sufficient mail transit time would help avoid resorting to *ad hoc* arrangements.

(2) Allow Use of One FPCA for All Elections in a Calendar Year

Currently some states require voters to submit a separate request for each election or allow use of the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) for some elections only. This initiative asks the states to accept one FPCA as a request for registration *and* ballots for all elections in a calendar year. (see **1998**, pg. 4)

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Ombudsman Service

The FVAP's Ombudsman Services is there to help you if you cannot resolve your voting concern locally. You can contact the service by regular mail, e-mail, fax or phone.

Toll-free phone numbers from 50 countries and all other contact information are listed below and at the bottom of this page.



In the U.S. 1-800-438-8683

Antigua 1-800-326-0220

Australia 0014-800-128509

Bahamas 180-995-09-20

Bahrain 800-621

Barbados 800-534-2104

Belgium 078-111-455

Bermuda 800-623-0077

Brazil 000-811-926-5585

Canada 800-995-0920

Chile 00-020-3071

Colombia 980-12-0896

Costa Rica 0-800-011-0125

Denmark 800-10-169

Dominican Rep. 800-751-7131

Finland 9800-156-284

France 0-800-900-156

Germany 013-081-9277

Greece 008-001-22-586

Hong Kong 800-6984

Hungary 00-800-11-158

Ireland 1-800-557-083

Israel 177-102-4012

Italy 1-678-72-444

Indonesia 00-800-1-923-3685

Japan 0031-11-2429



Liechtenstein

Luxembourg

Malaysia

1-155-4514

0-800-2499

800-2170

Mexico 95-800-010-1438

Monaco 0-59-00-156

Netherlands 06-022-2499

Neth. Antilles

001-800-753-0767

New Zealand

0-800-44-0799

Norway 800-12093

Panama 0083-28027-4197

Philippines 1-800-116-0009

Portugal 0501-8-13-035

San Marino 1-678-72-444

Singapore 800-1300-210

South Korea 0078-14-800-0203

Spain 900-93-1108

Sweden 020-793-503

Switzerland 155-4514

Taiwan 0080-10-3153

Thailand 001-800-1-1-923-6685

Trinidad & Tobago 1-800-934-7340

United Kingdom 0-800-895-7403

Uruguay 000-411-923-7985

Vatican City 1678-72-4444

Voting Assistance Officers

"To Do" This Month

- [] Obtain your copy of the 1998-99 *Voting Assistance Guide* and other supplies in preparation for the '98 election year. The first primary is on March 10 in Texas followed by Illinois on March 17, 1998 (see article below)
- [] Become familiar with the Voting Action Plan for your branch of Service (if military) or with the version for overseas citizens. As discussed in the article on page 1, this provides an excellent "road map" for carrying out your duties as VAO during an important election year.
- [] Ensure that the installation or Embassy/Consulate telephone operator has a current phone number where interested citizens can contact you to obtain information on participating in elections in 1998.
- [] Stock sufficient supplies of FPCAs, FWABs and other materials as needed.

VOTING INFORMATION CENTER

Contact your:

- U.S. Senators
- U.S. Representative
- Governor
- State Chief Election Official
- Department of State or
- Service Voting Action Officer

Hear recorded messages from these elected officials

Keep up with the latest election news from your state

Call Today:

703 - 693 - 6500

DSN 223 - 6500

Toll Free from Overseas

1998-99 Voting Assistance Guide now available



Obtain your copy of the 1998-99 *Voting Assistance Guide* from your regular distribution channels. The *Guide* was distributed in October 1997 to all branches of the Uniformed Services, the Executive Agencies, including the Department of State, and overseas citizen organizations.

The *Guide* is also available at www.fvap.gov. Additional supplies can be obtained through these sources. Contact the FVAP using the numbers below for additional information.

Federal Voting Assistance Program

Voting Information News provides information for citizens and Voting Assistance Officers and is published monthly by the staff of the Federal Voting Assistance Program.

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Vote Today for a Better Tomorrow.



Write to:

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Rm. 1B457, The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1155



Phone

(703) 695-0663
(800) 438-8683
DSN 225-0663



Fax

(703) 693-5507
DSN 223-5507

Voting Information Center

(703) 693-6500
DSN 223-6500



Internet

vote@fvap.gov
<http://www.fvap.gov>

Note: Copying or using VIN articles in other publications, etc. is encouraged.

(VAP, from pg. 1)

Phase II is in place January through October 1998 and calls for the execution of voting assistance programs by informing and assisting citizens in requesting registration for the primary elections which begin in March 1998. Efforts should concentrate on providing registration and voting assistance to eligible voters and their family members for primaries which include Federal and state offices.

Be particularly mindful of voters

on naval vessels and citizens in remote locations as their mail process may be much slower or may require more transit time. Ensure procurement and distribution of the FWAB to these citizens well in advance for use in general elections. Keep in mind, some states have expanded use of the FWAB for use within the U.S. and for primaries as well as for elections for non-Federal office. Some states may also expand use of this form on an *ad hoc* basis. Consult the 1998-99 Voting Assistance Guide as well as FVAP news releases and messages for up-to-date details on the use of the FWAB. The Guide became available through normal distribution channels in October 1997.

Overseas Citizens Voters Week (OCVW) begins June 28, 1998 while **Armed Forces Voters Week (AFVW)** begins August 30, 1998. These events should be emphasized during Phase II and Phase III of the Voting Action Plan and provide another excellent opportunity to enlist the participation of organizational and community

leaders in your absentee voting program.

Plan on using organizations that provide local service functions, including wives' clubs, Boy and Girl Scouts, veterans groups, family service organizations, and organizations of U.S. citizens overseas. The objective is to create an awareness and motivation to participate in the general election. Publicize the importance of early action on the part of the voter to obtain a ballot for the gen-

eral election well in advance of election deadlines. **Note:** In some cases, a separate FPCA request for a ballot must be submitted for each election. Again, the *Voting Assistance Guide* has specific state-by-state procedures.

Phase III begins in late August and ends with the general election on November 3, 1998. Emphasis should be on the in-hand delivery of the FPCAs to overseas citizens by **August 15**. In-hand delivery to citizens within the U.S. should take place by **September 15**. This phase should stress how to request ballots for the general election and how and when to use the FWAB as an emergency, back-up ballot.

Phase IV begins October 30 and carries through to December 31, 1998. This is considered an evaluation period in which members of the Uniformed Services, Federal and non-Federal overseas civilian citizens, Unit and Embassy/Consulate Voting Assistance Officers and local election officials will be asked to submit comments or participate in the 1998 Post-Election Survey, providing critical feedback to assess the effectiveness of the Program and plan for future election years.

Ten basic questions

How's Your Constitution?

Below are ten questions about the U.S. Constitution. Test your knowledge. Check your answers with the list at the bottom of page 4. Good luck!

- (1) When was the Constitution written?
- (2) Where was the Constitution written?
- (3) What are the first 10 amendments to the Constitution known as?
- (4) Do you recall what the introduction to the Constitution is also called?
- (5) How many branches of the Federal government are there?
- (6) How many U.S. Senators are there in Congress?
- (7) How long is a Senator's term of office?
- (8) How many voting members are there in the U.S. House of Representatives?
- (9) How long is a U.S. Representative's term of office?
- (10) Who nominates the justices to the Supreme Court?

State Department: Office of American Citizens Services

Voting Action Officer: Mr. Patrick Hegerty tel: (202) 647-6060 tel FTS: 8-647-4994, fax: (202) 647-6201

Service Voting Action Officers

Dept. of the Army: Mr. Tom Feazell tel: (703) 325-4530 tel DSN: 221-4530, fax: (703) 325-4532, fax DSN: 221-4532
E-mail: feazellt@hoffman-emh1.army.mil

Dept. of the Navy: Lt. Stephanie Nordhoff tel: (703) 693-0816, toll-free (800) 368-5056 tel DSN 223-0816, fax (703) 693-6471, E-mail: p662c2@bupers.navy.mil

Dept. of the Air Force: Mr. John Lowrance tel: (210) 652-7849, toll-free (800) 558-1404 tel DSN: 487-7849, DSN fax 487-5982, Commercial fax (210) 652-5982 E-mail: lowrancj@hq.afpc.af.mil

Marine Corps: GySgt Johnnie Jackson tel: (703) 696-2026 tel DSN: 426-2026, fax: (703) 696-2068, fax DSN: 426-2068
Internet: jacksonj@hqi.usmc.mil E-mail: jackson@mhp@hqmc ELMS: [GMHPO3:HQIHQMC]

U.S. Coast Guard: LCDR Reggie Sealey tel: (202) 267-2239, fax: (202) 267-4823
E-mail: rsealy@comdt.uscg.mil

All of the above can be reached through the DoD Voting Information Center and the FVAP WEB Site <http://www.fvap.gov>

Please share this copy of VIN with others.

(1998, from pg. 1)

(3) Eliminate Notary Requirements

Some states still require notarization of some voting materials such as the ballot return envelope. This procedure can be cumbersome and difficult to obtain as well as quite expensive in some foreign countries. We recommend this requirement be fulfilled by allowing citizens to execute a self-administered oath.

(4) Eliminate the Not Earlier Than Restriction on FPCAs

Some states will not accept an FPCA request for registration and/or ballot if it is received too early in the calendar year. Many voters are not aware of these "NET restrictions" and submit their FPCA requests without realizing they will not be processed. The FVAP is asking states to remove these restrictions and accept an FPCA at any time during the election year, up until the deadline for receipt of the form.

(5) Allow Late Registration in Special Cases

Often the date of discharge and a state's registration requirements combine to disenfranchise a discharged member of the Armed Forces or a citizen returning home from overseas employment. Allowing these citizens to register past the regular deadline for registration, even on the day of the election, would prevent their disenfranchisement.

(6) Provide a State Write-In Absentee Ballot

Submariners, Peace Corps volunteers, missionaries and many other citizens stationed in remote locations are unable to receive regular absentee ballots sent in the normal time frame. They would be provided with a state write-in absentee ballot in advance of an election allowing them to write in the name of their candidates or party preferences. Unlike the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) which in most states allows voting *for Federal offices only*, the State Special Write-In would provide a *full slate* of offices to be voted upon.

(7) Allow for Electronic Transmission of Election Materials

While most absentee election materials are successfully sent by mail, legislation providing for this alternate method of transmitting election materials would allow the voter to fax the FPCA for registration and ballot request to the election official.

In addition, the local election official could send the unvoted ballot by fax and accept the voted ballot back from the voter where circumstances would otherwise disenfranchise a voter. Most states currently have provisions allowing for some aspect of the electronic transmission process.

(8) Expand Use of the FWAB

Currently, use of the Federal Write In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) is allowed for Federal offices only, under certain conditions. Since this ballot is prepositioned overseas, by expanding its use to include special, primary, and runoff elections, citizens would not be disenfranchised because regular ballots for these elections are not received in a timely manner.

The FVAP is also asking the states to expand use of the FWAB by accepting it as a simultaneous registration form and voted ballot. This would lessen the administrative responsibilities of local election officials. This method is also more cost effective and streamlines the process for those voting from overseas. It is important to note that the information requested on the FWAB transmission envelope is the same as the information requested from the voter on the FPCA.

(9) Enfranchise Citizens Who Have Never Resided in the US

Approximately 50,000 U.S. citizens who have never resided in the U.S. are not entitled to vote under current law in many states. While they are subject to all other requirements of citizenship, they are not eligible to vote. We recommend that states allow these citizens to vote where either parent is eligible to vote under UOCAVA.

(10) Grant Emergency Authority to Chief Election Official

Granting emergency authority to the chief election official (CEO) in the state or territory would allow the CEO to designate alternate methods for handling absentee ballots in times of a declared emergency.

In addition to the list of initiatives, the FVAP is providing each state with suggested legislative language that may be used as a model for drafting legislation specific to each state.

For a copy of the letter sent to your state of voting residence, contact the FVAP using the contact information listed on page 2 of this newsletter.

Answers to Constitutional Quiz: (1) 1787 (2) Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (3) the Bill of Rights (4) the Preamble (5) three: Executive, Legislative & Judicial (6) 100 Senators (7) six years (8) 435 members (9) two years (10) the President